



# COPYRIGHTS

ART AND MUSIC FEED YOUR SOUL, BUT KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS CAN KEEP YOU FROM GOING HUNGRY.

## CHEW ON THIS:

- 1. You don't have to register to own the copyright.**  
Copyright exists as soon as you make your work tangible (or even digital!). Registration makes it possible to file a lawsuit and can increase the damages you may be awarded, but you have certain rights as soon as you create your original work.
- 2. The Poor Man's Copyright is a poor substitute.**  
Mailing yourself a copy of your work doesn't give you any of the benefits of registration (such as the ability to sue to enforce your rights, increased damages, and an award of attorneys' fees and costs). It really just gives you mail. Register your work at [copyright.gov](http://copyright.gov).
- 3. Parodies, promotion, and unlicensed covers usually aren't legal.**  
The copyright owner has the exclusive right to reproduce, publicly perform, publicly display, distribute, and make derivatives of their work...EVEN FOR FREE. Covers must be licensed. "Promotional use only" is not a legal defense. Parodies are allowable only in limited circumstances (it's a four-factor test).
- 4. If it's not in writing, you don't own it.**  
If you pay for a pizza, it's yours. Not for copyrights, though! Simply paying someone to create a work DOES NOT give you the copyright, even if it was your idea or concept. This can only be accomplished with properly written agreement.
- 5. Sharing equally isn't always fair.**  
When you collaborate with others to create a work, the law holds that unless you have a written contract that clearly states otherwise, you share the rights equally regardless of how much each person contributed to the work.



*This is not legal advice. It is for general information purposes only and does not create an attorney/client relationship.*